

## **Vote "Yes" on Article 11**

**The Selectmen's View**

**By THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

The board of selectmen is recommending that the Town proceed with the much discussed expansion of the North Hill Golf course to 18 holes from its present 9 holes. We believe we have addressed all of the issues raised at last year's Town Meeting.

The concerns last year centered on 4 issues; cost, profitability, environmental concerns and water quality. This year the Board appointed a committee of 5 citizens and asked them to address those concerns. The committee has done a superb job of pulling together information on all of the issues, which included thousands of pages of information and professional studies on water quality, fertilizer and pesticide management, golf course design, construction costs, profitability, and environmentally sensitive areas of the land. The committee is chaired by Jerry Dewing and includes former selectman Pat Dowd, Conservation Commission member Dan Baker, former president of the Massachusetts Golfers Association Paul Evans, and former golf course superintendent and licensed agronomist Craig Royle. The committee spent hundreds of hours of their own time and money researching the subject and reported to us Feb. 27 that the construction of the golf course was indeed feasible and recommended that we proceed with the expansion.

The committee's report included recommendations on and analysis of all of the issues raised at last year's Town Meeting. With respect to environmentally sensitive land abutting the North Hill Marsh, they recommended placing the most sensitive 90 acres of land under the control of the Conservation Commission to protect it forever from environmental danger. They analyzed the \$45,000 water quality study performed by SEA Consultants for the Town and agreed with its conclusion that the construction of the additional 9 holes with proper fertilizer and pesticide management by a licensed agronomist would not damage or endanger our aquifer. They analyzed golf course construction cost and concluded that expansion could be achieved at a cost of \$1,300,000 not \$3,000,000 as discussed last year. They had this conclusion affirmed by golf course architect Philip Wogan, who toured the land with the committee and gave them his written opinion. Lastly, they analyzed and confirmed the feasibility analysis performed by RKG Associates, professionals in golf course design and analysis with respect to profitability. They determined that using the most conservative estimates, North Hill will generate \$250,000 per year in net revenue to the Town by its 3rd year of operation and over \$400,000 per year by its 10th year.

## ***NORTH HILL***

**Article 11:** the Golf Course. Unlike the library, the proposed expansion of the North Hill Golf Course from 9 to 18 holes does not have a huge following, and it hasn't won the hearts and minds of town hall, either. The selectmen are solidly behind this project and it's expected that the finance committee will back it, too. However, the fiscal advisory committee voted to recommend against Article 11 and they are flanked, by design or by default, by a growing and vocal group of people who fear the town's wells will be jeopardized by chemicals used in turf management.

Some have quipped that 1995 is *not* the Year of the Golf Course. They chide the selectmen for waiting until December to appoint the committee that was then hastily charged with responsibility for getting this project through town meeting. The committee has worked non-stop to put together a credible plan with incredible speed, only to have other town committees complain that Article 11 was treated like a big secret until a few weeks ago.

Complicating all of this is the principal basis of opposition: water. Both highly qualified speakers and unqualified wanna be's have banded together and effectively convinced many people that expanding the golf course to 18 holes will contaminate drinking water pumped from the aquifer underneath North Hill. Duxbury has spent so much money buying land to protect groundwater that voters are understandably skittish about the golf course. The committee's got to overcome both factual and emotional obstacles to get this passed. And like the library, Article 11 requires a two-thirds vote.

**Article 12:** a citizens petition article asking that part of the North Hill property be transferred from general town jurisdiction to the Conservation Commission. The land petitioners want protected has been called the most critical in terms of safeguarding wetland and wildlife interests at the adjacent, Massachusetts Audubon Society sanctuary. They feel if it is transferred to the Conservation Commission, the 80+ acres will be protected from any future golf course plans.

**Duxbury Clipper, Wednesday, March 8, 1995**



**North Hill Golf Course**

Editor, *Duxbury Clipper*:

I would like to comment on Jerry Dewing's letter to the editor 2 weeks ago. Although golf courses may encourage some types of wildlife, such as Canada Geese, rarer, more reclusive species such as wood ducks and grey foxes will be adversely affected by a habitat change.

Some of the pesticides that have been applied to the current 9-hole course are listed as "persistent." Among the many adverse side effects of these chemicals is the inhibition of egg production by both amphibians and birds. Some of these chemicals even encourage the growth of certain insect populations and pathogens. Basically, we are upsetting a delicate and not well understood balance of nature by radically changing the environment.

A scientific study (Klein, 1989) of 11 golf courses in Maryland demonstrated a severe decline in number and diversity of wildlife species associated with waterways and wetlands draining these golf courses. A golf course has a similar effect on the natural environment that a residential development of 1/2 acre lots would have, according to this report. The literature includes numerous references to poisoning of waterfowl, raptors, and other birds due to pesticide applied to turf grass. It is therefore strongly suggested that sites for golf courses avoid areas where these many species of birds congregate. This 80+ acres of proposed expansion constitutes a type of closed canopy forest that is increasingly rare to New England and which provides an essential habitat to migratory song birds, birds of prey and waterfowl.

The proposed expansion includes plans for the filling of the numerous kettle holes that mark the topography of this unique, glacier-marked land. These depressions serve as vernal ponds—temporary ponds that come miraculously to life with frogs, toads and salamanders in the spring as they fill as the water table rises. These pools are essential to the continuation of many species of amphibians which are already threatened by habitat loss, acid rain and the chemical pollution of their environment.

Dr. Michael Klemens, director of program development at the Wildlife Conservation Society, studied Duxbury's population of endangered box turtles on this very piece of land in preparation for his book on amphibians and reptiles. He writes, regarding the proposed expansion that "local municipalities are the first line of defence of global biodiversity." Throughout this town, this state, this country and ultimately the world, species of wildlife are becoming "fragmented," isolated on increasingly smaller and more distant islands of relatively undisturbed land. Transforming a sizeable chunk of biologically rich land is not a trivial decision and will have consequences that are far more widespread than most of us realize. The proposed expansion would, without question, certainly diminish the natural beauty of this very beautiful and unique town.

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